

Message Text

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12

ACTION EA-14

INFO OCT-01 ADP-00 AID-20 IO-12 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-09 H-02

INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-03 RSC-01 PRS-01 SS-15

USIA-12 RSR-01 INRE-00 EB-11 /125 W
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P 111116 Z APR 73

FM AMEMBASSY SAIGON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0012

C O N F I D E N T I A L SAIGON 6145

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: ECON, MOPS, CB, VS

SUBJECT: STATUS OF MEKONG CONVOY

FOLLOWING RECEIVED FROM AMCONSUL CAN THO BEING REPEATED

QUOTE

CAN THO 0167

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: ECON, MOPS, CB, VS

SUBJECT: STATUS OF MEKONG CONVOY

1. THE COMMANDER OF VIETNAMESE RIVERINE FORCES IN MR IV SAID APRIL 11 THAT NINE MERCHANT SHIPS REMAIN IN TAN CHAU AWAITING ESCORT TO PHNOM PENH. THEY INCLUDE FOUR OIL TANKERS AND FIVE TUGS. TWO OF THE TUGS ARE TOWING AMMUNITION BARGES. ONE OF THE TANKERS IS OF KOREAN REGISTRY AND THE REMAINING THREE FLY PANAMANIAN FLAGS. THE TUGS INCLUDE THREE OF PHILIPPINE REGISTRY, ONE PANAMANIAN, AND ONE OF UNCONFIRMED REGISTRY (EITHER PANAMA OR PHILIPPINES). THE CREWS ARE KOREAN, PHILIPPINE, AS WELL AS HONG KONG, SINGAPORE, AND ROC CHINESE.

2. THE VIETNAMESE NAVY HAS ESTABLISHED TASK FORCE 212 AT TAN CHAU UNDER THE COMMAND OF A NAVY COLONEL. TF 212
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DIRECTS THE ESCORT OF THE MERCHANT SHIPS TO THE CAMBODIAN BORDER, WHERE CAMBODIAN NAVAL VESSELS RESUME THE ESCORT INTO PHNOM PENH. THE VIETNAMESE NAVAL ESCORT IS COMPOSED OF 23 COMBAT REVERINE BOATS.

3. SENIOR ARMY AND NAVY OFFICERS WERE MEETING AT MR IV HEADQUARTERS LATE ON APRIL 11 TO ASSESS THE SECURITY SITUATION ALONG THE MEKONG BETWEEN TAN CHAU AND THE BORDER. BRIG GEN HOANG, ACTING DEPUTY COMMANDER, MR IV, SAID THAT HE EXPECTED THE CONVOY TO RESUME IN THE NEXT DAY OR TWO. HE REPORTED, HOWEVER, THAT THE CAPTAINS OF SIX OF THE MERCHANT SHIPS HAD SAID THEY WANTED TO RETURN TO VUNG TAU RATHER THAN CONTINUE. HOANG ALSO CLAIMED THAT HEAVY CLOUD COVER RESTRICTED VNAF AIR SUPPORT FOR THE CONVOY. THE CLOUDS ALLEGEDLY PREVENT THE A-37'S AND A-1H'S FROM FLYING LOW OVER THE SHIPS.

4. THE VICE CONSUL IN CHAUDOC REPORTED THAT TWO SHIPS DOCKED AT TAN CHAU APRIL 10 WERE HIT AND SUNK BY AT3 WIRE GUIDED MISSILES. BARNES UNQUOTE
BUNKER

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*** Current Handling Restrictions *** n/a

*** Current Classification *** CONFIDENTIAL

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